إِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِىْ لِلَّتِىْ هِىَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Surah 38 Sad (The letter Sad)

سُوۡرَةُ صٓ مَكِّيَّةٌ
بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

صٓ وَالۡقُرۡاٰنِ ذِى الذِّكۡرِؕ ١

(38-1) Sad, (1) and by the Qur'an full of exhortation! (2)

(1) Although like all other enigmatic letters (muqattaat), it is also difficult to determine the meaning of the letter Suad, yet the interpretation of it given by Ibn Abbas and Dahhak is quite plausible. According to them, it implies: Sadiqun fiqauli- hi, or Sadaqa Muhammadun: Muhammad (peace be upon him) is truthful: whatever he says is the very truth.

(2) The words dhidh-dhikr of the text can have two meanings: (1) Dhi sharaf: the noble Quran. (2) Dhi at-tadhkir: the Quran which is full of admonition, or the Quran which serves as a reminder, or arouses a heedless person

بَلِ الَّذِیۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا فِىۡ عِزَّةٍ وَّ شِقَاقٍ ﴿۲﴾

(38-2) Nay, but the unbelievers are steeped in arrogance and stubborn defiance. (3)

(3) If the interpretation given of suad by Ibn Abbas and Dahhak is accepted, the sentence would mean this: By this noble Quran, or by this Quran which is full of admonition, Muhammad (peace be upon him) is presenting the truth, but the people who persist in their denial, are in fact, involved in arrogance and stubbornness. And if Suad is taken as one of those enigmatic letters whose meaning cannot be determined, then the answer to the oath is omitted, which is indicated by “but” and the sentence following it. The meaning then would be: The reason for the denial of these disbelievers is not that the religion which is being presented before them is unsound, or that Muhammad (peace be upon him) has shown some slackness in the matter of presenting the truth before them, but their own boasting and bragging, their haughtiness and stubbornness, and this is borne out by this Quran itself, which is full of admonition. Every unbiased person who studies it will admit that full justice has been done in it to the task of making the people understand the truth.

كَمۡ اَهۡلَكۡنَا مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ مِّنۡ قَرۡنٍ فَنَادَوۡا وَّلَاتَ حِيۡنَ مَنَاصٍ ﴿۳﴾

(38-3) How many a nation did We destroy before them! (When they approached their doom) they cried out (for deliverance), but the time for deliverance was already past.

وَ عَجِبُوۡۤا اَنۡ جَآءَهُمۡ مُّنۡذِرٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ وَ قَالَ الۡكٰفِرُوۡنَ هٰذَا سٰحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ ﴿۴﴾

(38-4) They wondered that a warner had come to them from among themselves, (4) and the deniers of the Truth said: “This is a sorcerer, (5) and a big liar.

(4) That is, they are so foolish that when a man from their own kind and from their own clan and brotherhood, whom they knew well, was appointed to warn them, they wondered at it, whereas it would have been strange if some other kind of creature had been

sent down from heaven to warn human beings, or an utter stranger had arisen among them suddenly and started functioning as a prophet. In that case they would have been perfectly justified to say: What an odd thing! How can this strange creature know our conditions and feelings and requirements that he should guide us? How can we test and find out the truth about the stranger who has suddenly arisen among us and know whether he is trustworthy or not? And how can we decide whether we should or should not believe in him when we have not judged and seen his character and personality?

(5) The disbelievers used the word sahir (wizard, sorcerer, magician) for the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the sense that whoever came in contact with him was so influenced by him that he would become his follower like a possessed person. He would least mind severing of his connections with others or incurring material losses. The father would give up the son and the son would give up the father. The wife would separate from the husband and the husband would separate from the wife. One would at once be prepared to leave his country if so required. One would even be ready to pass through the severest persecutions for the sake of the faith. (For further details, see (Surah Al- Anbiya, Ayat 3 and E.N. 5) thereof).

اَجَعَلَ ا لۡاٰلِ اِلٰـًا وَّاحِدًا اِنَّ ذَا لَشَىۡءٌ عُجَابٌ‏ ۵

(38-5) Has he made the gods one single God? This is truly astounding.”

وَ ا طَلَقَ ا لمَلَاُ مِ نْهُم اَنِ ا مْشُو اوَ اصبِرُواعَ لٰ ى اٰلِهَتِكُم اِنَّ ٰ هٰذَا لَشَى ءٌ يُّرَادُ

(38-6) And the elders among them went forth [6] saying: “Go ahead and be steadfast in adhering to your deities. [7] What is being said is with a design.” [8]

(6) The allusion is to the chiefs who got up and left Abu Talib when they had heard what the Prophet (peace be upon him) said.

(7) “This thing”: the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) asking them to affirm faith in La-ilaha ill-Allah so as to overpower both Arabia and the adjoining lands.

(8) What they meant to say was this: Muhammad has some vested interests. He is extending this invitation to us in order to subjugate us and rule us as his subjects.

مَا سَمِعنَا بِهٰذَا فِى ا لمِلَّةِ ا لاٰخِرَةِ ۖ اِن هٰذَا اِلَّا ا خ تِلَاقٌ ۷

(38-7) We have not heard this in the religious community close to our time. [9] This is nothing but a fabrication.

(9) That is, there have been our own elderly people in the recent past. There are Christians and Jews also living in our land and in the adjoining lands; and there are the Zoroastrians abounding in Iran and Iraq and eastern Arabia. None of them has ever preached that man should only believe in One Allah, Lord of the worlds, and in none else beside Him. No one can remain content with One God only. Everyone believes in the beloved ones of Allah also. They are All paying obeisance to them, making offerings at their shrines and praying for fulfillment of their needs and requirements. From one place people get children and from another provisions of life, and from yet another whatever they pray for. The whole world believes in their powers and capabilities, and those who have benefited from them tell how the needs of the people are being met and their difficulties being removed through their help and grace. Now this man is telling us a queer thing which we had never heard before. He says that

none of these holy men has any share in Godhead and that Godhead wholly belongs only to Allah.

ءَأُنزِلَ عَلَيۡهِ ٱلذِّكۡرُ مِنۢ بَيۡنِنَاۚ بَلۡ هُمۡ فِي شَكّٖ مِّن ذِكۡرِيۚ بَل
لَّمَّا يَذُوقُواْ عَذَابِ ٨

(38-8) Has this Exhortation been sent down among us only to him, to the exclusion of all others?” Nay, they are in doubt regarding My Exhortation, (10) and are saying all this because they have not yet had any taste of My chastisement.

(10) In other words Allah says: Muhammad, these people are not belying you but Me. As for your truthfulness, they had never doubted it before. Now that they are doubting it, it is because of My Admonition. Now that I have entrusted to you the mission of admonishing them, they have started doubting the truthfulness of the very person whose righteousness and piety they used to swear by. The same theme has also been discussed in (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 33 and E.N. 21) thereof.

أَمۡ عِندَهُمۡ خَزَآئِنُ رَحۡمَةِ رَبِّكَ ٱلۡعَزِيزِ ٱلۡوَهَّابِ ٩

(38-9) Do they possess the treasures of your Lord, the Most Mighty, the Great Bestower?

أَمۡ لَهُم مُّلۡكُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَمَا بَيۡنَهُمَاۖ فَلۡيَرۡتَقُواْ فِي ٱلۡأَسۡبَٰبِ ١٠

(38-10) Or do they possess the dominion of the heavens and the earth and of all that is in between them? If so, let them ascend the heights of the realm of causation and see! (11)

(11) This is an answer to this saying of the disbelievers: Was he the only (fit) person among us to whom Allah’s admonition should have been sent down? Allah says: It is for Us to decide whom We should choose and appoint as a Prophet and whom We should not. These people do not possess any power and authority to exercise choice in this regard. If they wish to attain such an authority, they should try to reach the divine Throne in order to obtain control over the office of sovereignty of the Universe, so that revelation should come down on him whom they regard as deserving their mercy and not on him whom We regard as fit for it. This theme has occurred at several places in the Quran, because the unbelieving Quraish again and again said: How did Muhammad (peace be upon him) become a Prophet? Did Allah find no better man among the principal leaders of the Quraish worthy of this office? (See (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 100); (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayats 31-32).

جُندٞ مَّا هُنَالِكَ مَهۡزُومٞ مِّنَ ٱلۡأَحۡزَابِ ١١

(38-11) This is only a small army out of the several armies that will suffer defeat here. (12)

(12) “There” implies the city of Makkah. That is, the time is coming when these people shall be humbled and routed in the very place where they are opposing and mocking you. Then, they will be standing, with heads hung down, before the same man whom they despise and refuse to recognize as a Prophet of Allah.

كَذَّبَتۡ قَبۡلَهُمۡ قَوۡمُ نُوحٖ وَعَادٞ وَفِرۡعَوۡنُ ذُو ٱلۡأَوۡتَادِ ١٢

(38-12) Before them the people of Noah, Ad, and Pharaoh of the tent-pegs gave the lie (to the Messengers) (13)

(13) The use of dhul-autad (of the stakes) for Pharaoh is either in the sense that his kingdom was very strong as though a stake were firmly driven into the ground, or for the reason that wherever his large armies camped, pegs of the tents were seen driven into the ground on every side, or because he would torture and punish at the stakes anyone with whom he was angry. And possibly the stakes may imply the pyramids of Egypt which seem to be driven into the earth like the stakes.

وَ ثَمُوۡدُ وَ قَوۡمُ لُوۡطٍ وَّ اَصۡحٰبُ لۡـَٔيۡكَةِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ الۡاَحۡزَابُ ١٣

(38-13) and so did Thamud and the people of Lot and the people of Aykah. These were all leagued together.

اِنۡ كُلٌّ اِلَّا كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ عِقَابِ ١٤

(38-14) Each of them gave the lie to Messengers and My decree of chastisement came upon them.

وَمَا يَنظُرُ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اِلَّا صَيۡحَةً وَّاحِدَةً مَّا لَهَا مِنۡ فَوَاقٍ ١٥

(38-15) They are waiting for nothing except a single Cry, after which there will be no second Cry. (14)

(14) That is, only a single blast of the torment will be enough to annihilate them; no other will be needed for the purpose. Another meaning of the sentence can be: After this they will get no more relief and no more respite.

وَقَالُوۡا رَبَّنَا عَجِّلۡ لَّنَا قِطَّنَا قَبۡلَ يَوۡمِ الۡحِسَابِ ١٦

(38-16) They say: “Our Lord, hasten to us our share (of chastisement) before the Day of Reckoning.” (15)

(15) That is, Allah’s torment will be so severe and terrible as mentioned above, but just consider the behavior of these foolish people. They are telling the Prophet mockingly: Do not put off our affairs till the Day of Reckoning with which you are threatening us, but settle our account just now.: Whatever punishment is to be inflicted on us should be inflicted immediately.

اِصۡبِرۡ عَلٰى مَا يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ وَاذۡكُرۡ عَبۡدَنَا دَاوٗدَ ذَا الۡاَيۡدِ‌ۚ اِنَّهٗۤ اَوَّابٌ‏ ١٧

(38-17) (O Prophet), bear with patience what they say, (16) and call to mind Our servant David, (17) who was endowed with great strength (18) and who constantly turned (to Allah).

(16) The allusion is to the absurd conversation of the disbelievers of Makkah, as narrated above, to the effect that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was a sorcerer and a liar, and to their objection whether he was the only fit person in the sight of Allah to be appointed as a Messenger, and to their some accusation that he had vested interest in preaching the doctrine of Tauhid to the people and not any religious mission.

(17) “Remember Our servant David”. It would mean: There is a lesson in this story for these people. Or it would mean: The remembrance of this story will help you too, to have patience. As

the narrative is meant to serve both purposes, comprehensive words have been used as contain both meanings. (For the story of the prophet David (peace be upon him), see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 251); (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 55); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 78-81); (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 15) and the E.Ns thereof, and (E.Ns 14 to 16 of Surah Saba).

(18) The words in the original are: dhal-ayd (possessor of the hands). The word “hand” is used metaphorically for strength and power not only in Arabic but in other languages also. When as an attribute of the Prophet David (peace be upon him) it is said that he was a "possessor of the hands", it will necessarily mean that he possessed great powers. These powers may mean the physical strength which he displayed during his combat against Goliath, military and political power by which he crushed the neighboring idolatrous nations and established a strong Islamic empire, moral strength by which he ruled like a poor king and always feared Allah and observed the bounds set by Him, and the power of worship by virtue of which, besides his occupations in connection with rule and government and fighting in the cause of Allah, he fasted every alternate day and spent a third of the night in worship according to a tradition of Bukhari. Imam Bukhari in his History has related, on the authority of Abu- Darda, that whenever the Prophet David (peace be upon him) was mentioned, the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to say: He was the greatest worshiper of God.

اِنَّا سَخَّرۡنَا الۡجِبَالَ مَعَهٗ يُسَبِّحۡنَ بِالۡعَشِىِّ وَالۡاِشۡرَاقِۙ ۱۸

(38-18) With him We had subjected the mountains that they join him in celebrating Allah's glory, evening and morning,

وَالطَّيۡرَ مَحۡشُوۡرَةً ؕ كُلٌّ لَّهٗۤ اَوَّابٌ‏ ۱۹

(38-19) and the birds, too, in their flocks, and turn again and again to celebrating Allah's glory. (19)

(19) For explanation, see(Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 79 and E.N. 71) thereof.

وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُۥ وَءَاتَيْنَٰهُ ٱلْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصْلَ ٱلْخِطَابِ ٢٠

(38-20) And We strengthened his kingdom and endowed him with wisdom and decisive judgement. (20)

(20) That is, he was never ambiguous in speech but clear and forthright. Whatever problem he talked about he would lay bare its basic points, and would clearly and precisely determine the real issue under question, and would pass a decisive judgment." This quality is not attained by a person unless he is granted wisdom, understanding and mastery of language of the highest degree.

وَ   اَتٰىكَ نَبَؤُا الۡخَصۡمِ اِ   تَسَوَّرُوا ا مِحۡرَابَ ۝٢١

(38-21) Has the story of the litigants reached you of those who entered his private chambers by climbing over the wall? (21)

(21) The object why the Prophet David (peace be upon him) has been mentioned here is to relate the story that begins from here; the object of mentioning his sterling qualities in the introduction was only to point out the high caliber of the Prophet David (peace be upon him) with whom this incident took place.

اِذ   دَخَلُوۡا عَلٰى دَاوٗدَ فَفَزِعَ مِ ُم قَالُوۡا لَا تَخَف   خَصۡمٰنِ بَغٰى بَ عۡضُنَا عَلٰى بَ عۡضٍ فَا حۡكُم
بَيۡنَنَا بِا لۡحَقِّ وَ لَا تُ شۡطِطۡ وَاهۡ اِلٰى سَوَآءِ الصِّرَاطِ ۝٢٢

(38-22) As they came upon David and he was frightened of them (22) they said: “Be not afraid. We are just two litigants: one of us has committed excess against the other. So judge rightly between us, and be not unjust; and guide us to the Right Way.

(22) He was alarmed because the two men had appeared in the private quarters of the ruler of the land suddenly, by climbing over the wall, instead of going before him by the proper entrance.

اِنَّ هٰذَاۤ اَخِىۡ لَ تِسۡعٌ وَّتِسۡعُوۡنَ نَعۡجَةً وَّلِىَ نَ عۡجَةٌ وَّاحِدَةٌ فَقَالَ
اَكۡفِلۡنِيۡهَا وَ عَزَّنِىۡ فِى الۡخِطَابِ ۝٢٣

(38-23) Behold, this is my brother; (23) he has ninety-nine ewes and I have only one ewe.” And yet he said: “Give her into my charge,” and he got the better of me in argument. (24)

(23) “Brother” does not mean a real brother but a brother in-faith and a member of one’s own clan.

(24) To understand what follows one should note that the complainant did not say that the other person had taken away his only ewe and added it to his own ewes, but said that he was asking for it, and since he was a powerful person he had prevailed

over him in the matter and he could not reject his demand, being a weak and poor man.

قَالَ لَقَدۡ ظَلَمَکَ بِسُؤَالِ نَعۡجَتِکَ اِلٰی نِعَاجِہٖ ؕ وَ اِنَّ کَثِیۡرًا مِّنَ الۡخُلَطَآءِ لَیَبۡغِیۡ
بَعۡضُہُمۡ عَلٰی بَعۡضٍ اِلَّا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَ قَلِیۡلٌ مَّا ہُمۡ ؕ وَ ظَنَّ دَاوٗدُ اَنَّمَا
فَتَنّٰہُ فَاسۡتَغۡفَرَ رَبَّہٗ وَ خَرَّ رَاکِعًا وَّ اَنَابَ ۩۲۴

(38-24) David said: “He has certainly wronged you in seeking to add your ewe to his ewes; (25) and indeed many who live together commit excesses, one to the other, except those that believe and act righteously; and they are but few.” (While so saying) David realized that it is We Who have put him to test; therefore, he sought the forgiveness of his Lord, and fell down, bowing and penitently turning (to Him). (26)

(25) Here, one should not doubt that the Prophet David (peace be upon him) gave his decision after hearing only what one party had to say. The fact of the matter is that when the respondent kept quiet at the complaint of the complainant and said nothing in defense it by itself amounted to a confession by him. That is why the Prophet David (peace be upon him) came to the conclusion that the facts of the case were the same as the complainant had stated.

(26) There is a difference of opinion as to whether it is obligatory to perform a sajdah (prostration) on this occasion or not. Imam Shafai says that it is not obligatory, for this is only a Prophet’s repentance; but Imam Abu Hanifah has opined that prostration here is obligatory. The traditionalists have related three traditions from Ibn- Abbas in this regard. According to Ikrimah, Ibn Abbas said: This is not one of those verses on the recitation of which prostration is obligatory, but I have seen the Prophet (peace be upon him) prostrating himself on this occasion. (Bukhari, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Musnad Ahmad). The second tradition which Saeed bin Jubair has related from Ibn Abbas is to the effect: The Prophet (peace be upon him) prostrated himself in Surah Suad and said: The Prophet David (peace be upon him) had prostrated himself in order to express his repentance and we prostrate ourselves as a token of gratitude, because his

repentance was accepted. (Nasai) In the third tradition that Mujahid has related from him, he says: Allah has commanded the Prophet (peace be upon him), in the Quran: These were the ones whom Allah had shown the right way; therefore, you should follow their way. (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 90). Now, since David was a Prophet and he had prostrated himself on this occasion, the Prophet (peace be upon him) also prostrated himself here only to follow his way. (Bukhari). These three are the statements of Ibn Abbas. Abu Said Khudri says: The Prophet (peace be upon him) once recited Surah Suad in his address, and when he came to this verse, he descended from the pulpit and performed a prostration and the audience also did the same along with him. Then, on another occasion, he recited this same Surah and when the people heard this verse, they were ready to perform the prostration. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: This is the repentance of a Prophet, but I see that you have gotten ready to perform the prostration. Saying this he descended from the pulpit and prostrated himself and the people also did the same. (Abu Daud). Although these traditions do not provide any absolute argument to prove that it is obligatory to perform the prostration here, yet they prove at least that because the Prophet (peace be upon him) generally performed a prostration on this occasion, it is in any case commendable to prostrate here.

Another thing that one notices in this verse is that Allah has used the words kharra rakian (fell in ruku) here, but all the commentators agree that this implies kharra sajid-an (fell in sajdah: prostration). On this very basis, Imam Abu Hanifah and his companions have expressed the opinion that one may perform only a ruku instead of a sajdah, when one recites or hears being recited a verse requiring a sajdah in the Prayer or outside it. For when Allah has used the word ruku to imply sajdah, it becomes obvious that ruku can represent sajdah. Imam Khattabi, a Shafeite jurist, also holds the same opinion, Though this opinion in itself is sound and reasonable, we do not find any precedent in the practices of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions that they might have been content with performing a ruku only instead of a sajdah on a verse requiring a sajdah. Therefore, one should act upon the view only when there is an obstruction in

performing the sajdah; it would be wrong to make it a practice, Imam Abu Hanifah and his companions themselves also did not intend that it should be made a practice; they only ruled that it was permissible.

فَغَفَرۡنَا لَهٗ ذٰلِكَ‌ ؕ وَاِنَّ لَهٗ عِنۡدَنَا لَزُلۡفٰى وَحُسۡنَ مَاٰبٍ‏ ۲۵

(38-25) Thereupon We forgave him his shortcoming and indeed (an exalted position of) nearness awaits him, and an excellent resort. (27)

(27) This shows that the Prophet David (peace be upon him) had certainly committed an error, and it was an error which bore some resemblance with the case of the ewes. Therefore, when he gave a decision on it, he at once realized that he was being put to the test. But the nature of the error was not such as could not be forgiven, or if forgiven, it would have deposed him from his high rank. Allah Himself says: When he fell down prostrate and repented, he was not only forgiven but his high rank in the world and the Hereafter also remained unaffected.

يٰدَاوٗدُ اِنَّا جَعَلۡنٰكَ خَلِيۡفَةً فِى الۡاَرۡضِ فَاحۡكُمۡ بَيۡنَ النَّاسِ بِالۡحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الۡهَوٰى فَيُضِلَّكَ
عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ يَضِلُّوۡنَ عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ لَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ شَدِيۡدٌۢ بِمَا نَسُوۡا يَوۡمَ
الۡحِسَابِ ﴿۲۶﴾

(38-26) (We said to him): “O David, We have appointed you vicegerent on earth. Therefore, rule among people with justice and do not follow (your) desire lest it should lead you astray from Allah's Path. Allah's severe chastisement awaits those who stray away from Allah's Path, for they had forgotten the Day of Reckoning. (28)

(28) This is the warning that Allah gave to the Prophet David (peace be upon him) on accepting his repentance along with giving him the good news of exalting his rank. This by itself shows that the error that he had committed contained an clement of the desires of the flesh; it also pertained to the abuse of power and authority; and it was an act which was unworthy of a just and fair-minded ruler.

We are confronted with three questions here:

(1) What was the error that the Prophet David committed?

(2) Why has Allah made only tacit allusions to it instead of mentioning it openly and directly?

(3) What is its relevance to the present context?

The people who have studied the Bible (the Holy Book of the Jews and Christians) are not unaware that in this Book the Prophet David (peace be upon him) has been accused clearly of committing adultery with the wife of Uriah the Hittite and then marrying her after having Uriah intentionally slain in a battle. It has also been alleged that this same woman, who had surrendered herself to the Prophet David (peace be upon him), while being another man’s wife, was the mother of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him). This story is found with all its details in chapters 11 and 12 of the Second Book of Samuel in the Old Testament. It had been included in it centuries before the revelation of the Quran. Any Jew or Christian who read his Holy Book anywhere in the world, or heard it read, was not only aware

of this story but also believed in it as true. It spread through them, and even in the present time no book is written in the West on the history of the Israelites and the Hebrew religion, in which this charge against the Prophet David (peace be upon him) is not repeated. This well-known story also contains the following:

And the Lord sent Nathan onto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man' lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. (2 Samuel, chapter 12: 1-9).

When this story was so well known among the people there was no need that a detailed account of it should have been given in the Quran, nor is it the way of Allah to mention such things openly in His Holy Book. That is why only tacit allusions have been made to it here as well as pointed out what the actual event was and what the people of the Book have turned it into.

The actual event as one clearly understands from the aforesaid statement of the Quran was:

The Prophet David (peace be upon him) had only expressed this desire before Uriah (or whatever be the name of the man) that he should divorce his wife; as this desire had been expressed not by a common man but by an illustrious king and a great Prophet before a member of the public, the man was finding himself constrained to yield to it even in the absence of any compulsion. On this occasion, before the man could act as the Prophet David had desired, two righteous men of the nation suddenly made their appearance before David and presented before him this matter in the form of an imaginary case. At first, the Prophet David thought it was a real case, and so gave his decision after hearing it. But as soon as he uttered the words of the decision, his conscience gave the warning that the parable precisely applied to the case between him and the person, and that the act which he was describing as an injustice had issued forth from his own person. As soon as he realized this, he fell down prostrate, repented and reversed his decision.

The question, as to how this event took the ugly shape as related in the Bible, also becomes obvious after a little consideration. It appears that the Prophet David (peace be upon him) had come to know of the unique qualities of the woman through some means and had started thinking that she should be the queen of the country instead of being the wife of an ordinary officer. Overwhelmed by the thought he expressed the desire before her husband that he should divorce her. He did not see any harm in it because it was not looked upon as anything improper among the Israelites. It was an ordinary thing among them that if a person happened to like the wife of another, he would freely request him to give her up for him. Nobody minded such a request, and often it so happened that friends would divorce their wives for each other’s sake of their own accord, so that the other may marry her. However, when the Prophet David (peace be upon him) expressed this desire, he did not realize that the expression of such a desire could be without compulsion and coercion when expressed by a common man, but it could never be so when

expressed by a king. When his attention was drawn to this aspect of the matter through a parable, he gave up his desire immediately, and the thing was forgotten. But afterwards when, without any desire or planning on his part, the woman's husband fell martyr on the battlefield, and he married her, the evil genius of the Jews started concocting stories and this mischievous mentality became even more acute after a section of the Israelites turned hostile to the Prophet Solomon. (Please see (E.N. 56 of Surah An-Naml). Under these motives the story was invented that the Prophet David (peace be upon him), God forbid, had seen Uriah’s wife washing herself from the roof of his palace. He had her called to his house and committed adultery with her and she had conceived. Then he had sent Uriah on the battle-front to fight the children of Ammon, and had commanded Joab, the army commander, to appoint him in the forefront of the battle where he should be killed. And when he was killed, he married his widow, and from the same woman the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) was born. The wicked people described all these false accusations in their Holy Book, so that they should go on reading it generation after generation and slandering the two most illustrious men of their community, who were their greatest benefactors after the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him).

A section of the commentators of the Quran has almost entirely accepted these tales that have reached them through the Israelites. They have dropped only that pan of these traditions in which mention has been made of the accusation of adultery against the Prophet David and the woman’s having conceived. The rest of the story as found in the traditions reproduced by them is the same as it was well known among the Israelites. Another group of the commentators has altogether denied that any such act was ever committed by the Prophet David (peace be upon him), which bore any resemblance with the case of the ewes. Instead of this, they have put forward such interpretations of this story as are wholly baseless, unauthentic and without relevance to the context of the Quran itself. But among the Muslim commentators themselves there are some who have accepted the truth and the facts of the story through the clear

references made to it in the Quran. Here are, for instance, some of their views:

Both Masruq and Saeed bin Jubair have related this saying of Abdullah bin Abbas: The only thing that the Prophet David (peace be upon him) did was that he expressed his desire before the woman’s husband that he should give up his wife for him. (Ibn Jarir).

Allama Zamakhshari writes in his commentary Al-Kashshaf: The way Allah has narrated the story of the Prophet David (peace be upon him) indicates that he had only expressed his desire before the man that he should leave his wife for him.

Allama Abu Bakr al-Jassas has expressed the opinion that the woman was not the other man’s wedded wife but was only his betrothed. The Prophet David (peace be upon him) had also asked for the same woman’s hand in marriage. This earned him Allah’s displeasure, for he had asked for her hand in spite of the fact that another man had already asked for her hand, and the Prophet David (peace be upon him) already had several wives with him in his house. (Ahkamul-Quran). Some other commentators also have expressed the same opinion, but this does not entirely conform to what the Quran has said. The words of the suitor as related in the Quran are to the effect: I have only one ewe; he says: Give this ewe also in my charge. The Prophet David (peace be upon him) also said the same thing in his decision: This person has certainly wronged you in demanding your ewe to be added to his ewes. This parable could apply to the case between the Prophet David (peace be upon him) and Uriah only in case the woman was the latter’s wife. Had it been the cast of asking for the woman’s hand when another man had already asked for her hand, the parable would have been like this: I desired to have an ewe, and this man said: leave this also for me.

Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn al-Arabi has discussed this question in detail in his Ahkamal-Quran and concluded: What actually happened was just that the Prophet David (peace be upon him) asked one of his men to leave his wife for him and made this

demand seriously. The Quran does not say that the man gave up his wife on this demand and the Prophet David (peace be upon him) then married her and the Prophet Solomon was born of her womb. What displeased Allah was that he asked the woman's husband to leave her for him. This act, even if otherwise lawful, was unworthy of the office of Prophethood; that is why he earned Allah's displeasure and was admonished.

This commentary fits in well with the context in which this story has been told. A little consideration of the context shows that it has been related in the Quran on this occasion for two objects. The first object is to exhort the Prophet (peace be upon him) to patience, and for this purpose he has been addressed and told: Have patience on what these people say against you, and remember Our servant David (peace be upon him). That is: You are being accused only of sorcery and lying, but Our servant David (peace be upon him) was even accused of adultery and having a person killed willfully, by the wicked people: therefore, bear up against what you may have to hear from these people. The other object is to warn the disbelievers to the effect: You are committing all sorts of excesses in the world with impunity, but the God in Whose Godhead you are committing these misdeeds does not spare anyone from being called to account. Even if a favorite and beloved servant of His happens to commit but a minor error, He calls him to strict accountability. For this very object the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been asked: Tell them the story of Our servant David (peace be upon him), who was a man of high character, but when he happened to commit sin, We did not even spare him but condemned him severely.

In this regard, there is another misunderstanding which must also be removed. The suitor in his parable said that his brother had 99 ewes and he had only one ewe, which he was demanding from him. From this one gets the idea that perhaps the Prophet David (peace be upon him) had 99 wives, and by having another he wanted to make their number 100. But, in fact, it is not necessary that every minor part of the parable should be literally applicable to the case between the Prophet David (peace be upon him) and Uriah the Hittite. In common idiom the numbers

ten, twenty, fifty, etc. are mentioned to express plurality and not to indicate the exact number of something. When a man tells another that he has told him something ten times over, he only means to stress that he has been told that thing over and over again. The same is also true here. By means of the parable the suitor wanted the Prophet David (peace be upon him) to realize that he already had several wives with him, and even then he desired to have the only wife of the other man. This same thing has been cited by the commentator Nisaburi from Hasan Basri: The Prophet David (peace be upon him) did not have 99 wives: this is only a parable (For a detailed and well-reasoned discussion of this story, see our book Tafhimat, vol. II, pp. 29.44).

وَمَا خَلَقۡنَا السَّمَآءَ وَالۡاَرۡضَ وَمَا بَيۡنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا ۚ فَوَيۡلٌ لِّلَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا مِنَ النَّارِ ؕ‏ ٢٧

(38-27) We did not create this heaven and earth and all that lies between them in vain. That is the fancy of those who denied the Truth. (29) So woe from the Fire to all who deny the Truth.

(29) That is, We have not created anything in the world merely in sport and fun so that it may be without any wisdom and purpose and justice, and there may occur no result from any act, good or bad. This is the conclusion of the preceding discourse as well as an introduction to the following theme. The object of this statement as a conclusion to the discourse is to impress the following truth: Man has not been left to wander about at will in the world, nor is this world a lawless kingdom that one may do here whatever he likes with impunity. As an introduction to the following theme, the sentence is meant to say: The person who does not believe in the meting out of the rewards and punishments, and thinks that both the good and the evil people will ultimately end up in the dust after death and that nobody will be called to account, nor will anyone be rewarded for good or punished for evil, in fact, regards the world as a plaything and its Creator a senseless player, and thinks that by creating the world and man in it, the Creator of the Universe has committed a useless thing. The same thing has been stated in different ways at

several places in the Quran, e.g. Did you think that We created you without any purpose, and that you would never be brought back to Us? (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayat 115).

We have not created the heavens and the earth and whatever lies between them merely in sport: We have created them with the truth, but most of them do not know. For the resurrection of them all the appointed time is the Day of Decision. (Surah Ad-Dukhan, Ayat 38-40).

اَمۡ نَجۡعَلُ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ كَالۡمُفۡسِدِيۡنَ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ اَمۡ
نَجۡعَلُ الۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ كَالۡفُجَّارِ ۝٢٨

(38-28) Shall We then treat alike those that believe and act righteously and those that create mischief on earth? Or treat alike the God-fearing and the wicked? (30)

(30) That is, do you think it is reasonable and fair that both the pious and the wicked should be treated alike in the end? Do you regard this concept as satisfying that the pious man should not get any reward for his piety and the wrongdoer should not receive any punishment for his sins? Obviously, if there is to be no Hereafter, and there is to be no accountability and no rewards and no punishments for human acts, it negates both Allah’s wisdom and His justice, and the entire order of the Universe becomes a blind order. On this assumption there remains no motive for doing good and no deterrent against evil. God forbid, if the Godhead of God should be such a lawless kingdom, the one who leads a pious life in the face of all kinds of hardships in the world and endeavors to reform the people, would be a foolish person, and the one who gains benefits by committing all kinds of excesses and enjoys sinful pleasures of life, would be a wise man.

كِتٰبٌ اَنۡزَلۡنٰهُ اِلَيۡكَ مُبٰرَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوۡۤا اٰيٰتِهٖ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ اُولُوا الۡاَلۡبَابِ ۝٢٩

(38-29) This is the Blessed Book (31) that We have revealed to you, (O Muhammad), that people with understanding may reflect over its verses and those with understanding derive a lesson.

(31) The Quran has been called a blessed Book in the sense that it is highly useful for man. It gives him the best guidance to improve and reform his life. By following it he has only to gain and nothing to lose.

وَ وَہَبۡنَا لِدَاوٗدَ سُلَیۡمٰنَ ؕ نِعۡمَ الۡعَبۡدُ ؕ اِنَّہٗۤ اَوَّابٌ ﴿ؕ۳۰﴾

(38-30) We bestowed upon David (an illustrious son), Solomon.[32] How excellent a servant (of Ours he was)! Indeed he constantly turned to Us in devotion.

(32) The Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) has been mentioned already at the followings places: (Surah Al- Baqarah, Ayat 102); (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 5); (Surah Al- Anbiya, Ayats 78-82); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 15-44); (Surah Saba, Ayats 12-14).

اِذۡ عُرِضَ عَلَیۡہِ بِالۡعَشِیِّ الصّٰفِنٰتُ الۡجِیَادُ ﴿ۙ۳۱﴾

(38-31) And when one evening well-trained and running horses of noble breed were brought to him (33)

(33) The words as-safinat-ul-jiyad in the original imply the horses, which are very calm and quiet when they stand, and very fast moving when they run.

فَقَالَ اِنِّیۡۤ اَحۡبَبۡتُ حُبَّ الۡخَیۡرِ عَنۡ ذِکۡرِ رَبِّیۡ ۚ حَتّٰی تَوَارَتۡ بِالۡحِجَابِ ﴿ٝ۳۲﴾

(38-32) he said: “Lo! I have come to love this wealth[34] on account of the remembrance of my Lord.” And when the horses disappeared,

(34) The Arabic word khair in the text is used for abundance of wealth as well as for horses metaphorically. As the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) had kept these horses for fighting in the way of Allah, he called them khair.

رُدُّوۡہَا عَلَیَّ ؕ فَطَفِقَ مَسۡحًۢا بِالسُّوۡقِ وَ الۡاَعۡنَاقِ ﴿۳۳﴾

(38-33) (he ordered): “Bring these horses back to me,” and then he began to gently stroke their shanks and necks. (35)

(35) There is a difference of opinion among the commentators about the translation and commentary of these verses.

One section of them interprets them as follows: The Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) became so absorbed in reviewing the horses and watching

their races, that he forgot to offer his Asr Prayer, or according to some others, to perform certain devotions that he used to perform before the sunset. Then when the sun went down, he commanded that the horses be brought back, and when they came back, the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) started slashing them with the sword, or in other words, slaughtering them as a sacrifice to Allah, because they had caused him to become heedless of the remembrance of Allah. Accordingly, the verses have been translated thus: And he said: I so preferred the love of this wealth that I became heedless of the remembrance (the Asr Prayer, or the special devotions) of my Lord till (the sun) went down (behind the veil of the west). (Then he commanded:) bring them back, (and when the horses came back) he began to stroke their shanks and necks (with the sword). Although this commentary has been given by some major commentators, it is not plausible for the reason that in this the commentator has to add three things from himself, which have no basis whatsoever. In the first place, he has to assume that the Prophet Solomon’s Asr Prayer was lost in the occupation, or some special devotions that he used to perform at that time, whereas the words of the Quran are only to the effect: I so preferred this wealth that I became heedless of the remembrance of my Lord. In these there is no ground for taking any word for the Asr Prayer or the special devotions. Secondly, he also assumes that the sun set, whereas there is no mention of the sun whatsoever. On the contrary, when one reads the words hatta tawarar bilhijab (when they disappeared from sight) one’s mind automatically turns to as-safinat ul jiyad (well-bred horses) which have been mentioned in the preceding verse. Thirdly, he also has to assume that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) did not simply stroke the

shins and necks of the horses with the hand but stroked them with the sword, whereas the Quran does not contain the words mashan-bissaif or any other pointer from which stroking may be taken to mean stroking with the sword. We have a fundamental difference with this kind of the commentary. In our opinion, only in four cases it would be right to interpret the words of the Quran in other than their normally accepted meaning: (1) Either there should be a pointer to it in the words of the Quran itself; or (2) There should be an allusion to it at some other place in the Quran; or (3) An explanation of it should be afforded by some authentic Hadith; or (4) It should have some other reliable source, e.g. if it pertains to history, there should be an historical evidence to support it. If it pertains to the manifestations of the universe, there should be authentic scientific knowledge to substantiate it. And if it pertains to the Shariah values, the sources of Islamic law should explain it. In the absence of any of these, we do not think it is right to invent a story on the basis of one’s own imagination and add it to the words of the Quran.

One section of the commentators has differed a little from the above translation and commentary. They say that the pronoun in both hatta tawarat bil-hijab and ruddu-ha alayya turns only to the sun. That is, when the Asr Prayer was lost and the sun went down behind the veil of the west, the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) said to the workers of destiny: Turn the sun back so that the Asr time comes back for me to offer the Prayer. So, the sun retreated and he performed his Prayer. But this commentary is even more unacceptable than the previously mentioned one not because Allah is powerless to bring the sun back, but because Allah has made no mention of it anywhere. On the contrary, if such a wonderful miracle had actually been worked for the sake of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him), it would certainly be worthy of mention. Moreover, if the extraordinary event of the returning of the sun after having set had actually taken place; the history of the world would never be without it. In support of this commentary these commentators present some Ahadith also in order to prove that the returning of the sun after having set is not a rare event that happened only once, but it has happened several times. There is the mention of

bringing the sun back in connection with the Prophet's (peace be upon him) Ascension (miraj); the sun was also brought back on the occasion of the Battle of the Trench for the Prophet (peace be upon him), and also for Ali, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was sleeping with his head in Ali's lap and his Asr Prayer was lost: then the Prophet (peace be upon him) had prayed for the return of the sun and it had returned. But the reasoning from these traditions is even weaker than the commentary in support of which they have been presented. Ibn Taimiyyah has proved as fabricated the tradition about Ali after a detailed discussion of its chains and transmitters. Imam Ahmad says it has no basis, and Ibn Jauzi says that it is without any doubt a forged tradition. The tradition of the sun's being brought back on the occasion of the battle of the Trench also is weak according to some traditionalists and fabricated according to others. As far as the tradition regarding the event of the Ascension is concerned, the truth about it is that when, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was describing what had happened in the Night of Ascension, before the disbelievers of Makkah, they asked for a proof of it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied that on the way from Jerusalem he had seen a caravan at such and such a place, which had met with such and such an accident. When asked as to when that caravan would reach Makkah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) named the day. When the day came, the people of the Quraish waited for the caravan all day till the sun began to set. On this occasion the Prophet prayed that the sun should not set till the caravan had arrived. So, the caravan actually arrived before the sunset. Some reporters even have stated that the day on that occasion had been enhanced by an hour, and the sun had stood still for that long. The question is: Are such traditions sufficient evidence for the proof of such an extraordinary event? As we have said above, the returning of the sun, or its standing still for an hour, is no ordinary event. Had such an event actually taken place, it would have become well known the world over. Its mention and narration could not remain restricted to only a few reporters.

The third section of the commentators interprets these verses as any unbiased person would interpret them from these

words. According to this commentary, what actually happened was this: When a squadron of fine, well bred horses was presented before the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him), he said: I love this wealth not for the sake of personal glory or desire but for the cause of raising the Word of my Lord. Then he ordered that the horses run a race, and they disappeared from sight. Then he ordered that they be brought back, and when they were brought back, according to Ibn Abbas: He started passing his hand on their necks and shanks with love. This same commentary is correct in our opinion, because it corresponds to the words of the Quran, and for the sake of the full meaning, nothing needs to be added to it, which may neither be in the Quran, nor in any authentic Hadith, nor in the Israelite history.

Besides, one should also note that Allah has narrated this event immediately after using epithets like nim al-abd, innahu awwab (an excellent servant, who turned to His Lord over and over again) for the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him). This clearly shows that the object is to relate this message: Behold, what a good servant of Ours he was! He loved the means of kingly pomp and glory not for the sake of the world but for Our sake! After watching and reviewing his grand cavalry, he did not boast of his power and grandeur like the worldly rulers but even at that time he remembered only Us.

وَ لَقَدۡ فَتَنَّا سُلَيۡمٰنَ وَ اَلۡقَيۡنَا عَلٰى كُرۡسِيِّهٖ جَسَدًا ثُمَّ اَنَابَ ﴿۳۴﴾

(38-34) Surely We put Solomon to the test and cast upon his throne a mere body. Thereupon he penitently turned (to Us).

قَالَ رَبِّ اغۡفِرۡ لِىۡ وَهَبۡ لِىۡ مُلۡكًا لَّا يَنۡۢبَغِىۡ لِاَحَدٍ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِىۡ‌ ۚ اِنَّكَ اَنۡتَ الۡوَهَّابُ ﴿۳۵﴾

(38-35) He said: “My Lord, forgive me and bestow upon me a kingdom such as none other after me will deserve. Surely You are the Bounteous Giver.” (36)

(36) In view of the contest, the real object here is to relate this event; the preceding verses are an introduction to it. Just as

above this, first the Prophet David (peace be upon him) was praised, then the event narrated by which he was put to temptation, then it was said that Allah Almighty does not spare even such a beloved servant from accountability, then about his noble nature it was said that as soon as he was warned of the temptation, he repented and bowed before Allah and withheld himself from the act, so also here the sequence is like this: First, the Prophet Solomon’s (peace be upon him) high rank and his deep sense of devotion has been mentioned, then it is said that he was also put to the test, then it has been stated that when a mere body was placed on his throne, he immediately felt warned on his error, and pleading the forgiveness of his Lord, withdrew from the act, because of which he was involved in the temptation. In other words, Allah by means of these two stories wants to impress two things upon the reader simultaneously: (1) Not to speak of the common men, even high-ranking Prophets were not spared from His strict accountability; and, (2) The right attitude for man is not to brag and feel proud after committing an error, but to bow down humbly before his Lord as soon as he realizes his sin. It was the result of this attitude that Allah not only forgave the mistakes of those illustrious men but blessed them with still more favors and kindness.

Here, the question again arises as to what was the temptation in which the Prophet Solomon was involved; what is the meaning of placing a mere body on his throne, and what was the nature of the warning on the occurrence of which he repented? In reply to this the commentators have adopted four different points of view:

One section of them has related a long story whose details are disputed, but their resume is this: The error committed by the Prophet Solomon was either that one of his wives continued to worship the idols in the palace for forty days and he remained unaware of it, or that he remained confined to his residence for a few days and did not attend to redressing of the oppressed people’s grievances. For this he was punished as follows: A satan somehow made away with his ring by which he ruled over the jinns, men and wind. As soon as he lost the ring he was deprived

of his powers and he remained wandering from place to place for forty days; in the interval the satan continued to rule in the guise of Solomon. The placing of a mere body on Solomon's throne implied this very satan, who had sat on his throne. Some people have gone to the extent to say that during that period even the chastity of the women in the royal household did not remain safe from the satan. At last from his conduct the ministers and the chiefs and the scholars of the court began to doubt that he was not Solomon. Therefore, when they opened the Torah before him, he fled. On the way the ring fell from his hand in the sea, or he cast it into the sea himself, and a fish swallowed it. Then, somehow the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) came by the fish. When in order to cook it, he cut open its belly, he found his ring in it. Then, no sooner did he get the ring than the jinns and men presented themselves humbly before him. This whole story, from the beginning to the end, is nonsensical and absurd, which the converts from among the Jews and Christians took from the Talmud and other Israelite traditions and spread it among the Muslims. It is strange that some of our well known scholars took these traditions as authentic and cited them as the explanation of the allusions of the Quran, whereas neither is there any truth in Solomon's ring, nor could his glorious works be attributed to any ring, nor had the satans been given the power that they might disguise themselves as Prophets and mislead the people, nor can it be imagined about Allah that He would punish a Prophet for an error in such a manner as to enable a satan to corrupt and destroy a whole community, disguised as a prophet. The Quran itself repudiates this commentary. In the verses that follow Allah says: When Solomon met with the trial, and he asked Our forgiveness for it, then We subdued the wind and the satans to him. But, on the contrary, according to the above commentary, the satans were already under his control by virtue of the ring. It is strange that the scholars who have made this commentary did not care to consider what the subsequent verses say.
The second section of them says that a son was born to the Prophet Solomon after twenty years. The satans feared that if he became king after Solomon, they would continue to remain slaves as they were under him. Therefore, they plotted to kill him. When Solomon came to know of this plot, he hid the child in the clouds

so that he was brought up there. This was the temptation in which he was involved. He placed reliance on the protection of the clouds instead of having trust in Allah. For this he was punished in this way that the child died and fell on his throne as a mere body. This tale also is baseless and is expressly against the Quran, for in this also it has been assumed that the winds and satans were already under the Prophet Solomon’s control, whereas the Quran in clear words has stated their subjection to be an event that took place after the trial.

The third section says that the Prophet Solomon one day swore that he would go in to his 70 wives that night, and from each a warrior would be born, who would fight in the cause of Allah, but while he said this he did not say: Insha Allah: if Allah so wills. Consequently, only one wife conceived and from her also a defective child was born, whom the midwife brought and placed on his throne. This Hadith has been reported by Abu Harairah from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and it has been related by Bukhari and Muslim and other traditionists in several ways. In Bukhari itself this tradition has been related at different places in different ways. At one place the number of the wives has been stated as 60 and at others 70 or 90 or 99 or 100. As far as the chains of the transmitters are concerned, most of the traditions have strong chains, and their authenticity cannot be disputed from the point of view of the principles of reporting. But the subject-matter of the Hadith is patently against reason, and proclaims aloud that such a thing could not have been said by the Prophet (peace be upon him), as reported. But, on the contrary, he might have probably mentioned it as an example of the foolish and nonsensical tale-telling of the Jews, and the hearer might have misunderstood that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself had stated it as an event. To force the people to accept such traditions only on the strength of their chains of transmitters would be making religion a matter of mockery and jest. Everyone can calculate for himself that even in the longest night of winter the interval between the “Isha” and the Fajr Prayers cannot be of more than ten to eleven hours. If the minimum number of the wives be 60, it would mean that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) went on having intercourse with them continuously for 10 to 11 hours that night at the rate of six wives per hour, without

having a moment’s rest. Is it practically possible? And can it be expected that the Prophet (peace be upon him) might have related it as an event? Then in the Hadith nowhere has it been said that the body that had been placed on Solomon's throne, as stated in the Quran, implied the malformed child. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had narrated this event as a commentary of this verse. Furthermore, though it is understandable why the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) asked for Allah’s forgiveness on the birth of the child, one fails to understand why, along with the prayer for forgiveness, he prayed: My Lord, grant me a kingdom as may belong to no one else after me.

Another commentary which Imam Razi has preferred is this: The Prophet Solomon was afflicted with a serious disease, or on account of an impending danger his body had been reduced to a mere skeleton. But this commentary also does not conform to the words of the Quran. The Quran says: We put Solomon to the test and placed a mere body on his throne. Then he turned (to Allah). From these words no one can understand that the mere body implied the body of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) himself. They clearly show that putting to the test implied some error that he happened to commit. On this, the way he was given the warning was that a mere body was placed on his throne, and when he realized his error he turned to Allah.

As a matter of fact, this is one of the most difficult places of the Quran, and we do not find any indisputable ground for giving a definite and absolute commentary of it. But if the words of the Prophet Solomon’s prayer: My Lord, forgive me, and grant me a kingdom as may belong to no one else after me, are read in the light of the Israelite history, it appears that probably he cherished in his heart the desire that his son should succeed him on the throne so that His kingdom and sovereignty should continue in his own race after him. This same thing has been called a temptation for him by Allah, and he realized this when his heir Rehoboam grew up into an unworthy young man, whose ugly manners clearly foretold that he would not be able to sustain the mighty kingdom of the Prophets David and Solomon (peace be

upon them) even for a few days. Placing a mere body on his throne probably means that the son whom he wanted to succeed him on the throne, was an unworthy person. Therefore, he restrained his desire, asked for Allah’s forgiveness and prayed that the kingdom should end with him, and he would curb his desire to have it continued in his dynasty. The Israelite history also shows the same thing. The Prophet Solomon did not make any will about his successor, nor made it binding for the people to obey a particular person. After him his ministers put Rehoboam on the throne, but not long afterwards ten tribes of Israel took northern Palestine and broke away, and only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the throne of Jerusalem.

فَسَخَّرۡنَا لَهُ الرِّيۡحَ تَجۡرِىۡ بِاَمۡرِهٖ رُخَآءً حَيۡثُ اَصَابَۙ ۝۳۶

(38-36) We subjected the wind to him, so that it blew gently at his bidding, wherever he directed it, (37)

(37) For explanation, see (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 81 and E.N. 74) thereof. However, there is one thing which requires further explanation here. In Surah Al-Anbiya where mention has been made of subjecting the wind for the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him), it has been described as the strongly blowing wind, but here “it blew by his command gently wherever he intended”. This means that the wind in itself was strong and violent as is needed for moving the sailing-ships but it had been made gentle for the Prophet Solomon in the sense that it blew whither-soever he wanted it to blow for his commercial fleets.

وَالشَّيٰطِيۡنَ كُلَّ بَنَّآءٍ وَّغَوَّاصٍۙ ۝۳۷

(38-37) and We also subjected the devils to him all kinds of builders and divers;

وَّ اٰخَرِيۡنَ مُقَرَّنِيۡنَ فِى الۡاَصۡفَادِ ۝٣٨

(38-38) and others that were bound with chains. (38)

(38) For explanation, see (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 82); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 17, 39)and the E.Ns thereof. The satans imply the jinns, and the satans linked in chains imply the serving satans, who were fettered and imprisoned as a punishment for making mischief. It is not necessary that the fetters and chains in which those satans were bound might be made of iron and they might appear as bound in them like the human prisoners. In any case, they were imprisoned in a manner that they could neither escape nor were able to commit further mischief.

هٰذَا عَطَآؤُنَا فَامۡنُنۡ اَوۡ اَمۡسِكۡ بِغَيۡرِ حِسَابٍ‏ ۝٣٩

(38-39) "This is Our bestowal. So give or withhold as you wish without account." (39)

(39) This verse can have three meanings: (1) This is Our unlimited gift: You have the authority to give of it freely to whomsoever you like and keep it from whomsoever you like. (2) This is Our gift: You may give of it to whomsoever you like and keep it from whomsoever you like, you will not be called to account for giving it or keeping it from the people. (3) Another meaning of it given by some commentators is: The satans have been placed entirely under your control: you may set free whomsoever you like and restrain whomsoever you like. You will not be held accountable for this.

وَاِنَّ لَهٗ عِنۡدَنَا لَزُلۡفٰى وَحُسۡنَ مَاٰبٍ‏ ۝٤٠

(38-40) Indeed an exalted position of nearness awaits him and an excellent resort. (40)

(40) Here, the object is to tell that just as a servant's arrogance causes Allah's displeasure and wrath, so does his humility earns Allah's pleasure and approval for him. If a servant commits an error and becomes even more arrogant when warned, he is led to

the same fate as is being mentioned in connection with the story of Adam and Satan below. Contrary to this, if a servant happens to commit an error and he repents and bows down before his Lord humbly, he is blessed with such bounties as the Prophets David and Solomon (peace be upon them) were blessed with. The prayer that Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) had made after seeking Allah’s forgiveness, was literally fulfilled and Allah actually granted him a kingdom as had neither been granted to anyone before him nor bestowed on anyone after him. Having control over the winds and the jinns is an extraordinary power, which has been granted only to the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) and to none else in human history.

وَاذۡكُرۡ عَبۡدَنَاۤ اَيُّوۡبَۘ اِذۡ نَادٰى رَبَّهٗۤ اَنِّىۡ مَسَّنِىَ الشَّيۡطٰنُ بِنُصۡبٍ وَّعَذَابٍؕ ۝۴۱

(38-41) And remember Our servant Job: (41) when he cried to his Lord: “Behold, Satan has afflicted me with much hardship and suffering.” (42)

(41) This is the fourth place in the Quran where the Prophet Job (peace be upon him) has been mentioned. Before this he has been mentioned in (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 163); (Surah Al-Anam, Ayat 84) and (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 83-84). For the details about him, please see (E.Ns 76 to 79 of Surah Al- Anbiya).

(42) This does not mean that Satan has afflicted me with illness and brought distress upon me, but it means: The affliction of the severities of illness, the loss of property and wealth, and the desertion of the near and dear ones is not so great a torment and trouble for me as the temptation of Satan, who is exploiting my condition to despair me of my Lord and wants that I should turn ungrateful to Him and become desperate and impatient. This meaning of the lamentation of the Prophet Job (peace be upon him) is preferable for two reasons: (1) According to the Quran, Allah has granted Satan only the power of temptation. He has not given him the power to afflict with illness the worshipers of Allah and compel them to deviate from the way of service and obedience by causing them physical ailments. (2) In Surah Al-Anbiya when the Prophet Job (peace be upon him) puts before Allah his complaint about illness and disease, he does not

mention Satan at all, but says only: I have been afflicted with the disease and You are most Merciful.

اُرۡكُضۡ بِرِجۡلِكَ‌ۚ هٰذَا مُغۡتَسَلٌۢ بَارِدٌ وَّشَرَابٌ ﴿۴۲﴾

(38-42) (We commanded him): "Stamp your foot on earth, and here is cool water to wash with and to drink." (43)

(43) That is, as soon as he stamped his foot on the ground, a spring gushed forth by Allah's command, drinking from which and washing with which was the remedy of the Prophet Job's (peace be upon him) disease. Most probably he was suffering from some skin disease. According to the Bible also: Satan smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. (Job, 2: 7).

وَوَهَبۡنَا لَهٗۤ اَهۡلَهٗ وَمِثۡلَهُمۡ مَّعَهُمۡ رَحۡمَةً مِّنَّا وَذِكۡرٰى لِاُولِى الۡاَلۡبَابِ
﴿۴۳﴾

(38-43) And We granted to him his family and also the like of them, (44) as a mercy from Us, and as a reminder to people of understanding, (45)

(44) Traditions show that during this illness everyone except his wife had deserted the Prophet Job (peace be upon him); even his children had turned away. To this Allah has alluded, saying: When We granted him health, the whole family returned to him, and then We granted him even more children.

(45) That is, in it there is a lesson for an intelligent man. Neither should man forget God and become arrogant in good times nor despair of Him in bad times. Good fortune and misfortune are entirely in the Power of Allah, the One. If He wills He can change the best times of man into the worst times and the worst into the best. Therefore, a wise person should trust in Him alone in all sorts of circumstances and should pin all his hopes on Him.

وَخُذۡ بِيَدِكَ ضِغۡثًا فَاضۡرِبْ بِّهٖ وَلَا تَحۡنَثۡ‌ ؕ اِنَّا وَجَدۡنٰهُ صَابِرًا‌ ؕ نِعۡمَ الۡعَبۡدُ‌ ؕ اِنَّهٗۤ اَوَّابٌ
﴿۴۴﴾

(38-44) (and We said to him): “Take in your hand a bundle of rushes and strike with it, and do not break your oath.” (46) Indeed We found him steadfast. How excellent a servant (of Ours) he was. Indeed he constantly turned (to his Lord). (47)

(46) A careful study of these words shows that the Prophet Job (peace be upon him) during illness had been annoyed with somebody (according to traditions, his wife) and sworn to beat him or her by giving so many stripes. When Allah restored him to health and the anger of the illness was gone, he became worried as how to fulfill the oath. For if he carried out the oath, he would be inflicting pain on an innocent person, and if he did not, he would be committing the sin of breaking the oath. Allah took him out of the difficult situation by the command: Take a broom containing as many sticks of straw as the number of the stripes you had sworn to give; then strike the person just once with the broom so as both to fulfill your oath and to avoid giving undue trouble to the person concerned.

Some jurists hold the view that this concession was specially meant for the Prophet Job (peace be upon him), and some others think that other people also can take advantage of it. The first view has been cited by Ibn Asakir from Abdullah bin Abbas and by Abu Bakr al-Jassas from Mujahid, and Imam Malik also held the same view. The second view has been adopted by Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Muhammad, Imam Zufar and Imam Shafei. They say that if a person, for instance, has sworn to give his servant ten stripes, and afterwards combines ten whips and strikes him only once in a way that some part of each whip strikes him, his oath will be fulfilled.

Several Ahadith show that the Prophet (peace be upon him), in order to inflict the prescribed punishment on a fornicator who was too ill or too weak to receive a hundred stripes, also adopted the method taught in this verse. Allama Abu Bakr al-Jassas has related a tradition on the authority of Saeed bin Saad bin Ubadah to the effect that a person from the tribe of Bani Saidah happened to commit fornication, and he was a sick man

and a mere skeleton. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded: Take a branch of the palm tree with a hundred twigs on it and strike him therewith once and for all. (Ahkam al Quran). In Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Tabarani, Abdur Razzaq and other collections of Hadith, there are several Ahadith supporting it, which conclusively proves that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had devised this very method for inflicting the prescribed punishment on a sick or weak person. However, the jurists lay the condition that some part of every twig or piece of straw must strike the culprit, and even if only one stroke, it must also hurt the culprit; that is, it is not enough just to touch him but he must be struck with it.

Here the question also arises that if a person has sworn to do something and afterwards he comes to know that it is improper then what should he do? There is a tradition from the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the effect that in such a case one should do only that which is better, and the same is the atonement for the oath. Another tradition from him says that one should do something good instead of the improper thing and should atone for his oath. This verse supports this second tradition, for if keeping oneself from an improper thing had been the atonement for the oath, Allah would not have told the Prophet Job (peace be upon him) to strike the broom once and fulfill his oath, but would have said: Do not do this improper thing, and your restraint itself is the atonement for your oath.

This verse also shows that it is not necessary to carry out immediately what one has sworn to do. The Prophet Job (peace be upon him) had sworn an oath in the state of illness, and fulfilled it after complete recovery, and not immediately even after the recovery.

Some people have regarded this verse as an argument for practicing pretense under the Shariah. No doubt it was a pretense which the Prophet Job (peace be upon him) had been taught but it had been taught not for evading anything obligatory but for avoiding an evil. Therefore, in the Shariah those pretenses only are lawful, which are adopted to remove injustice and sin and evil

from one’s own self or from another person, otherwise practice of pretense is highly sinful if it is employed for the purpose of making the unlawful as lawful, or evading the obligatory duties and righteous acts. For a person who practices pretense for such impious objects, in fact, tries to deceive God. For example, a person who transfers his wealth to another before the completion of a year on it, only for the purpose of evading payment of the Zakat on it, not only evades an obligatory duty, but also thinks that Allah will get deceived by this trickery and will consider him as relieved of his duty. The jurists who have mentioned such pretenses in their books, do not mean that one should practice them in order to evade the Shariah obligations, but they mean to point out that a judge or ruler cannot take to task a person who escapes the consequences of a sin under a legal cover for his affair is with Allah.

(47) The Prophet Job (peace be upon him) has been mentioned in this context to impress the reader that when the righteous servants of Allah are afflicted with hardships and calamities, they do not complain of their distress to Allah but endure the tests and trials set by Him patiently and invoke only Him for help. They do not despair of God and do not turn to others for help if their distress is not removed after making invocations to God for some time, but they believe that whatever they will get, they will get only from Allah. Therefore, they remain hopeful of His mercy, no matter how long they might have to suffer the distress. That is why they are honored and blessed with the favors and bounties with which the Prophet Job (peace be upon him) was honored and blessed in his life. So much so that if they get involved in a moral dilemma due to a state of agitation, Allah shows them a way out of it in order to save them from evil, as He showed a way to the Prophet Job (peace be upon him).

وَاذۡكُرۡ عِبٰدَنَاۤ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ وَاِسۡحٰقَ وَيَعۡقُوۡبَ اُولِى الۡاَيۡدِىۡ وَالۡاَبۡصَارِ‏ ۴۵

(38-45) And remember Our servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob they were endowed with great strength and vision. (48)

(48) The actual words in the text mean: Those who possessed the hands and the insights. The hand, as we have explained above, implies power and capability. To describe these Prophets as “men of great power and insight” means that they were practical men. They possessed great power to obey Allah and to abstain from sin, and they had made great efforts for raising the Word of Allah in the world. “Insight” does not mean eye-sight but the vision of the heart and mind. They could see and recognize the truth. They did not live like the blind in the world, but they walked the straight path of guidance, in the full light of knowledge, with open eyes. In these words, there is a subtle allusion to this also that the people who commit evil, and have gone astray, are in fact, deprived of the hands as well as the eyes. He only, who works in the cause of Allah, possesses the hands, and he, who distinguishes between the light of the truth and the darkness of falsehood, only possesses the eyes.

اِنَّآ اَ طَ ۃٍ بِخَالِصَ ذِرَی الدَّارِ ۴۶

(38-46) Verily We exalted them in consideration of a sterling quality: their remembrance of the Abode of the Hereafter. (49)

(49) That is, the real cause for their success and eminence was that there was nothing of worldliness in their character. All their efforts, mental and physical, were directed towards the Hereafter. They remembered it themselves and urged others also to remember it. That is why Allah exalted them to such high ranks as have never been attained by those who remained absorbed in earning worldly wealth and prosperity. In this regard, one should also keep in view the subtle point that Allah here has only used the word ad-dar (that abode, or the real abode) for the Hereafter. This is meant to impress the truth that this world is no abode for man, but only a passage and a rest house, which man has to leave in any case. The real abode is the abode of the Hereafter. He who works to adorn that abode is the man of insight and such a one should inevitably be a commendable person in the sight of Allah. As for him who in order to adorn his transitory abode in this rest house behaves in a way as to ruin his real abode in the Hereafter is foolish and naturally cannot be liked by Allah.

وَ اِنَّہُم عِندَنَا لَمِنَ الۡمُصۡطَفَیۡنَ الۡاَخۡیَارِ ؕ﴿۴۷﴾

(38-47) In Our sight they are among the chosen and excellent ones.

وَ اذۡکُرۡ اِسۡمٰعِیۡلَ وَ الۡیَسَعَ وَ ذَاالۡکِفۡلِ ؕ وَ کُلٌّ مِّنَ الۡاَخۡیَارِ ؕ﴿۴۸﴾

(38-48) And remember Ishmael, Elisha, (50) and Dhu al-Kifl. (51) All were of the best.

(50) The Prophet Al-Yasa (peace be upon him) has been mentioned only twice in the Quran, in Surah Al-Anam, Ayat 86 and here, without any detail about him. Only his name appears in the chain of the Prophets. He was one of the major Prophets of Israel, belonged to Abel Meholah, a place on the river Jordan, and is well known as Elisha among the Jews and Christians. When the Prophet Elijah (peace be upon him) had taken refuge in the Sinai peninsula, he was commanded to return to Syria and Palestine for some important works, one of which was to prepare the Prophet Elisha for his successor-ship. Accordingly, when the Prophet Elijah came to his town, he found Elisha ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth. The Prophet Elijah passed by him and cast his mantle upon him, and he left the oxen and followed him. (I Kings, 19:15-21). He remained under training with him for 10 to 12 years. Then, when Allah recalled Elijah, he was appointed Prophet in his place. (2 Kings, oh.2). The Second Book of the Kings gives a detailed account of the Prophet Elisha (Chs, 2 to 13), which shows that when the Israeli state of northern Palestine got lost in polytheism, idol-worship and moral evils, Elisha a pointed Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, king of Israel against the royal dynasty due to whose misdeeds those evils had spread in Israel. Jehu not only put an end to Baal-worship, but also condemned to death every member of the wicked family, including its children. But in spite of this reformist revolution the evils that had taken root in Israel could not be completely eradicated, and after the death of the Prophet Elisha they assumed enormous proportions; so much so that the

Assyrians began to invade Samaria whenever they pleased. (For details, see (E.N. 7 of Surah Bani-Israil) and (E.Ns 70, 71 of Surah As-Saffat).

51. Dhul-Kifil also has been mentioned only twice in the Quran, in (Surah Al Anbiya, Ayat 85) and here. For our research about him see (E.N. 81 of Surah Al-Anbiya).

هٰذَا ذِكۡرٌ ؕ وَ اِنَّ لِلۡمُتَّقِیۡنَ لَحُسۡنَ مَاٰبٍ ﴿۴۹﴾

(38-49) This was a remembrance. An excellent retreat awaits the God-fearing

جَنّٰتِ عَدۡنٍ مُّفَتَّحَۃً لَّہُمُ الۡاَبۡوَابُ ﴿۵۰﴾

(38-50) everlasting Gardens with gates wide open for them (52)

(52) The words mufattahat-al-lahum-ul-abwab may have several meanings: (1) They will go about in the Gardens (Paradise) freely without any hesitation. (2) No effort will have to be made to open the gates of Paradise, they will open automatically as soon as they will have the desire to enter them. (3) The angels appointed for keeping Paradise will open the gates for them as soon as they see them. This third meaning has been expressed more clearly at another place in the Quran, thus: When they arrive there, and its gates shall already have been opened, its keepers will say: Peace be upon you, you have fared well, enter here to dwell forever. (Surah Az-Zumar, Ayat 73).

مُتَّکِـِٕیۡنَ فِیۡہَا یَدۡعُوۡنَ فِیۡہَا بِفَاکِہَۃٍ کَثِیۡرَۃٍ وَّ شَرَابٍ ﴿۵۱﴾

(38-51) wherein they shall recline, wherein they shall ask for abundant fruit and drinks,

وَ عِنۡدَہُمۡ قٰصِرٰتُ الطَّرۡفِ اَتۡرَابٌ ﴿۵۲﴾

(38-52) and wherein there shall be with them well-matched, bashful mates. (53)

(53) “Of equal age” may mean that they will be of equal age among themselves, and also that they will be of the same age as their husbands.

هٰذَا مَا تُوۡعَدُوۡنَ لِیَوۡمِ الۡحِسَابِ ﴿۵۳﴾

(38-53) All this is what you are promised for the Day of Judgement.

اِنَّ هٰذَا لَرِزۡقُنَا مَا لَهٗ مِنۡ نَّفَادٍ ۝۵۴

(38-54) This is Our provision for you, never to end.

هٰذَا ؕ وَ اِنَّ لِلطّٰغِيۡنَ لَشَرَّ مَاٰبٍ ۝۵۵

(38-55) All this (is for the God-fearing). But for the transgressors, an evil resort awaits them

جَهَنَّمَ ۚ يَصۡلَوۡنَهَا ۚ فَبِئۡسَ الۡمِهَادُ ۝۵۶

(38-56) Hell, where they will be roasted. An evil place to dwell!

هٰذَا ۙ فَلۡيَذُوۡقُوۡهُ حَمِيۡمٌ وَّ غَسَّاقٌ ۝۵۷

(38-57) All this (is for them); so let them taste boiling water and pus, (54)

(54) Several meanings of the word ghassaq, as used in the original, have been given by the lexicographers: (1) Any moisture that is discharged by the body in the form of pus, blood, or mixture of pus and blood, etc. and this includes tears as well. (2) Something extremely cold. (3) Something stinking and giving out offensive smell. However, the word is generally used in the first meaning only, though the other two meanings also are correct lexically.

وَّ اٰخَرُ مِنۡ شَكۡلِهٖۤ اَزۡوَاجٌ ؕ ۝۵۸

(38-58) and other sufferings of the kind.

هٰذَا فَوۡجٌ مُّقۡتَحِمٌ مَّعَكُمۡ ۚ لَا مَرۡحَبًۢا بِهِمۡ ؕ اِنَّهُمۡ صَالُوا النَّارِ ۝۵۹

(38-59) (Observing their followers advancing to Hell they will say, among themselves: “This is a troop rushing in to

you. There is no welcome for them. They are destined to roast in the Fire.”

قَالُوۡا بَلۡ اَنۡتُمۡ لَا مَرۡحَبًۢا بِكُمۡ‌ؕ اَنۡتُمۡ قَدَّمۡتُمُوۡهُ لَـنَا‌ ۚ فَبِئۡسَ الۡقَرَارُ ۝٦٠

(38-60) They will reply: “Rather, no welcome to you. (You will roast in Hell.) It is you who led us to this end. What an evil resort!”

قَالُوۡا رَبَّنَا مَنۡ قَدَّمَ لَنَا هٰذَا فَزِدۡهُ عَذَابًا ضِعۡفًا فِى النَّارِ ۝٦١

(38-61) They will say: “Our Lord, give twofold punishment in the Fire to him who has led us to this.”

وَ قَالُوۡا مَا لَنَا لَا نَرٰى رِجَالًا كُنَّا نَعُدُّهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاَشۡرَارِ ؕ ۝٦٢

(38-62) They will say to one another: “But why do we not see those whom we considered him among the wicked? (55)

(55) This implies the believers whom the disbelievers used to look down upon as bad people in the world. It means: They will look around bewildered and will find only themselves and their guides in Hell but will find no trace of those people of whom they used to talk disparagingly in the world, and whom they used to mock in their meetings for talking about God, the Messenger and the Hereafter.

اَتَّخَذۡنٰهُمۡ سِخۡرِيًّا اَمۡ زَاغَتۡ عَنۡهُمُ الۡاَبۡصَارُ ۝٦٣

(38-63) Is it that we mistakenly made fun of them; or have they disappeared from our sight?”

اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ لَحَقٌّ تَخَاصُمُ اَهۡلِ النَّارِ ۝٦٤

(38-64) Verily all this is true. This is how the inmates of the Fire will dispute among themselves.

قُلۡ اِنَّمَاۤ اَنَا مُنۡذِرٌ ‌ۖ وَّمَا مِنۡ اِلٰهٍ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ الۡوَاحِدُ الۡقَهَّارُ‌ ۝٦٥

(38-65) Tell them, (O Prophet): [56] "I am nothing but a warner. [57] There is no deity but Allah, the One, the Supreme,

(56) Now the discourse turns to the same theme with which it began. One should read it with (1-14 verses) in order to understand the meaning fully.

(57) In verse 4 it was said: The people wonder that a warner from among themselves has come to them. Here it is being said: Tell them: I am only a warner. That is: I do not command an army that I may forcibly pull you from a wrong way and put you on the right way. If you do not listen to me and do not accept my message, you will only be causing a loss to yourselves. If you like to remain ignorant, you may continue to be heedless, for you will see your end yourselves.

رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَا بَيۡنَهُمَا الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡغَفَّارُ ۝۶۶

(38-66) the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is in between them, the Most Mighty, the Most Forgiving."

قُلۡ هُوَ نَبَؤٌا عَظِيۡمٌ ۝۶۷

(38-67) Say: "This is a tiding of tremendous import

اَنۡتُمۡ عَنۡهُ مُعۡرِضُوۡنَ ۝۶۸

(38-68) from which you are turning away." [58]

(58) This is the answer to what the disbelievers said in verse 5: Has he made just One God in place of all the gods? This is indeed a strange thing. It means: You may frown and scowl as you like, but this is a reality of which I am informing you, and your frowning and scowling cannot change it.
This answer not only contains the statement of the truth, but it also contains the argument for it. The mushriks said: Deities are many of whom one is Allah also. How is it that you have done away with all other deities and kept only One Allah? In answer it was said: The real Deity is One Allah alone, for He is dominant

over everything: He is the Owner of the earth and the heavens, and everything in the Universe belongs to Him. Every being other than Him, whom you have set up as other gods in the Universe, is dominated and subdued before Him; therefore, the subservient beings cannot be associates in the Godhead of the Dominant and All-Mighty God. Therefore, there is no ground for which they may be regarded as deities.

مَا كَانَ لِىَ مِنۡ عِلۡمٍ بِالۡمَلَاِ الۡاَعۡلٰى اِذۡ يَخۡتَصِمُوۡنَ ٦٩

(38-69) (Tell them): “I had no knowledge of the High Council when they were disputing.

اِنۡ يُّوۡحٰٓى اِلَىَّ اِلَّاۤ اَنَّمَاۤ اَنَا نَذِيۡرٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ ٧٠

(38-70) I am told (about matters) by means of revelation only because I am a clear warner.”

اِذۡ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلۡمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّىۡ خَالِقٌۢ بَشَرًا مِّنۡ طِيۡنٍ ٧١

(38-71) When your Lord said to the angels: (59) “Verily I am creating a human being from clay. (60)

(59) This is the explanation of the dispute referred to about, and the dispute implies Satan’s dispute with God, as becomes evident from the verses that follow. In this regard, one should bear in mind the fact that “the exalted” implies the angels, and the dialogue between Allah and Satan was not direct but it took place through some angel. Therefore, no one should have the misunderstanding that Allah also was included among the exalted ones. This story has already been narrated at the following places: (Surah Al- Baqarah, Ayats 30-39); (Surah Al-Araf, Ayats 11-25); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 26-44); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayats 61-65); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 50); (Surah Ta Ha, Ayats 116-126).

(60) Lexically, bashar means a gross body whose surface is bare and uncovered by anything else. After the creation of man this word has been used for man himself, but mentioning him by the word bashar before his creation and making him from clay

clearly means: I am about to make an image of clay, which will be without any feathers and hair, etc. whose skin will not be covered by wool or hair or feathers like the skin of other animals.

فَاِذَا سَوَّيۡتُهٗ وَنَفَخۡتُ فِيۡهِ مِنۡ رُّوۡحِىۡ فَقَعُوۡا لَهٗ سٰجِدِيۡنَ‏ ﴿۷۲﴾

(38-72) After I have created him and breathed into him of My spirit, (61) fall you down, prostrating yourselves to him.” (62)

(61) For explanation, see (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 29-30), and (E.N. 16 of Surah As-Sajdah).

(62) For explanation, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 34); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 11) and the E.Ns thereof.

فَسَجَدَ الۡمَلٰٓئِكَةُ كُلُّهُمۡ اَجۡمَعُوۡنَۙ‏ ﴿۷۳﴾

(38-73) Then the angels, all of them, prostrated themselves before Adam

اِلَّاۤ اِبۡلِيۡسَ ؕ اِسۡتَكۡبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ‏ ﴿۷۴﴾

(38-74) except Iblis. He waxed proud and became one of the unbelievers. (63)

(63) For explanation, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 34); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 50) and the E.Ns. thereof.

قَالَ يٰۤاِبۡلِيۡسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ اَنۡ تَسۡجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقۡتُ بِيَدَىَّ ؕ اَسۡتَكۡبَرۡتَ اَمۡ كُنۡتَ مِنَ الۡعَالِيۡنَ‏ ﴿۷۵﴾

(38-75) The Lord said: “O Iblis, what prevented you from prostrating yourself before him whom I created of My Two Hands. (64) Are you waxing proud, or fancy yourself to be too exalted?”

(64) These words have been used to point out the honor, rank and glory bestowed on man by his Creator. In other words, Allah did not get man created through his angels but created him by Himself because his creation was a highly noble task. Therefore,

what is meant to be said is: What has prevented you from prostrating yourself before him whom I have made directly Myself?

The words be-yadaiia (both hands) probably are meant to refer to the fact that this new creation combines in itself two important aspects of Allah’s power of creation: (1) That man has been given an animal body on account of which he belongs to the animal kingdom. (2) That on account of the Spirit breathed into him, he has been characterized with qualities which place him in honor and merit above all earthly creations and creatures.

قَالَ اَنَا خَيۡرٌ مِّنۡهُ ؕ خَلَقۡتَنِىۡ مِنۡ نَّارٍ وَّ خَلَقۡتَهٗ مِنۡ طِيۡنٍ ﴿۷۶﴾

(38-76) He replied: “I am nobler than he. You created me from fire and created him from clay.”

قَالَ فَاخۡرُجۡ مِنۡهَا فَاِنَّکَ رَجِيۡمٌ ﴿ۖ۷۷﴾

(38-77) He said: “Get out of here; (65) surely you are accursed, (66)

(65) “Out of it”: From the place where Adam was created and where the angels were commanded to bow down before Adam, and where Iblis committed disobedience of Allah.

(66) Lexically, the word rajim, as used in the original, means “cast off” or “smitten”; in common usage it is used for the person, who has been thrown down from a place of honor and humiliated. In Surah Al-Aaraf, the same thing has been expressed thus: Get out: you are indeed one of those who wish themselves ignominy. (Verse 13).

وَّ اِنَّ عَلَيۡکَ لَعۡنَتِىۡۤ اِلٰى يَوۡمِ الدِّيۡنِ ﴿۷۸﴾

(38-78) and My curse shall remain upon you till the Day of Resurrection.” (67)

(67) This does not mean that there will be no curse on him after the Day of Judgment, but rather it means: He will remain accursed till the Day of Judgment because of his disobedience, and after the Day of Judgment he will be punished for the sins which he will have committed from the creation of Adam until Resurrection.

قَالَ رَبِّ فَاَنۡظِرۡنِىۡۤ اِلٰى يَوۡمِ يُبۡعَثُوۡنَ ﴿۷۹﴾

(38-79) Satan said: “My Lord, then grant me respite till the Day that they are raised up.”

قَالَ فَاِنَّکَ مِنَ الۡمُنۡظَرِيۡنَ ﴿ۙ۸۰﴾

(38-80) He said: “You are of those who have been granted respite

اِلٰى يَوۡمِ الۡوَقۡتِ الۡمَعۡلُوۡمِ ﴿۸۱﴾

(38-81) till the Day whose Hour I know.”

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَاُغۡوِيَنَّهُمۡ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ﴿۸۲﴾

(38-82) (Iblis) said: “By Your glory, I shall mislead them all

اِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنۡهُمُ الۡمُخۡلَصِيۡنَ ﴿۸۳﴾

(38-83) except those of Your servants, the chosen ones from amongst them.” (68)

(68) This does not mean: I will not lead Your chosen servants astray, but it means: I shall have no power over Your chosen servants.

قَالَ فَالۡحَقُّ وَالۡحَقَّ اَقُوۡلُ ﴿۸۴﴾

(38-84) He (i.e. Allah) said: “This is the Truth and I only speak the Truth

لَاَمۡلَئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنۡكَ وَمِمَّنۡ تَبِعَكَ مِنۡهُمۡ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ﴿۸۵﴾

(38-85) I will certainly fill the Gehenna with you (69) and with all those among them who follow you.” (70)

(69) “With you” is not only addressed to Iblis but to the whole species of satans. That is, Iblis and his whole army of the satans who will be joining him in misleading mankind till Resurrection.

(70) This entire story has been related in answer to this saying of the chiefs of the Quraish: Was he the only (fit) person among us to whom Allah’s admonition should have been sent down? Its

first answer was the one given in verses 9-10, saying: Are you the owners of the treasures of the mercy of your Mighty and Bounteous Lord? And does the kingdom of the heavens and the earth belong to you, and is it for you to decide as to who should be appointed God’s Prophet and who should not be appointed? In the second answer the chiefs of the Quraish have been told: Your jealousy, your pride and arrogance against Muhammad (peace be upon him) are similar to the jealousy and arrogance of Iblis against Adam (peace be upon him). Iblis had also refused to acknowledge the right of Allah to appoint anyone He pleased as His vicegerent, and you are also refusing to acknowledge His right to appoint anyone He pleases as His Messenger. Iblis disobeyed the command to bow down before Adam, and you are disobeying the command to follow Muhammad (peace be upon him). Your resemblance with him does not end here, but your fate also will be the same as has been pre-ordained for him, i.e. the curse of God in the world and the fire of Hell in the Hereafter.

Besides, in connection with this story, two other things also have been stressed: (1) Whoever is disobeying Allah in this world, is in fact, falling a prey to Iblis, his eternal enemy, who has resolved to mislead and misguide mankind since the beginning of creation. (2) The one who disobeys Allah on account of arrogance and persists in His disobedience is under His wrath: such a one has no forgiveness from Him.

قُلْ مَآ أَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ وَمَآ أَنَا۠ مِنَ ٱلْمُتَكَلِّفِينَ ٨٦

(38-86) (O Prophet), tell them: “I do not ask you for any recompense for the performance of this task; (71) nor am I given to affectation. (72)

(71) That is, I am a selfless person: I have no vested interest in preaching this message.

(72) That is, I am not one of those who arise with false claims for the sake of vanity and pose to be what actually they are not. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has not been made to say this merely for the information of the disbelievers of Makkah but this

is testified by his whole life which he lived among the same people for forty years before his advent as a Prophet. Every child of Makkah was a witness that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was not an impostor. Never had anybody from among the people of Makkah ever heard anything from him which might have caused somebody the doubt that he aspired to be a great man and was planning and scheming for that end.

اِن۟ن وَ اِلَّا ذِ رٌ كّ عٰلَمِنَ ٨٧

(38-87) This is nothing but an Admonition for all people the world over.

وَ لَتَعلَمُنَّ نَبَاَ ٗه بَ دَ حِيْنٍ ٨٨

(38-88) You will know the truth of the matter after a while.” (73)

(73) That is, those of you who live will see for themselves within a few years that what I am saying is fulfilled. Those who die will come to know as soon as they pass through the gate of death that the truth is the same which I am preaching.